

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
SS-15 ICA-11 SSM-03 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /105 W  
-----028733 070422Z /63

R 061427Z APR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7489  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1946

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PERP, LE, SY, IS, PLO  
SUBJ: LEBANESE FRONT ATTENTISME

1. SUMMARY: PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER KARIM PAKRADOUNI SAYS LEBANESE FRONT HAS DECIDED ON PASSIVE STRATEGY FOR THE MOMENT AND WILL AWAIT EVOLUTION OF LEBANESE MOSLEM POLITICAL WILLINGNESS TO JOIN WITH THEM IN OPPOSING THE PALESTINIANS. PAKRADOUNI IS PERSONALLY ALMOST CERTAIN THAT VIOLENCE WILL OCCUR BETWEEN UNIFIL AND THE PALESTINIANS AND THAT, AS A RESULT, UNIFIL WILL BEGIN TO COLLAPSE. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WILL NOT RISK SENDING LEBANESE ARMY TO THE SOUTH, AND, EVEN IF IT DID, THE ARMY WOULD NOT GO. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF CALLED ON PAKRADOUNI APRIL 5. HE WAS  
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BROADLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR A SOLUTION IN THE SOUTH AND ALSO FOR PROGRESS ON LEBANON'S DEEP-SEATED INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS. HE THOUGHT THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR OF 1975-76 WOULD NOW RESUME, ALTHOUGH GENERALLY IN A NON-VIOLENT POLITICAL "WAR OF ATTRITION."

3. LEBANESE FRONT PERSPECTIVE. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT, EARLY IN THE COURSE OF THE ISRAELI INVASION, BACHIR GEMAYEL HAD TRIED TO CONVINCE THE FRONT LEADERSHIP THAT THE LONG-AWAITED OPPORTUNITY FOR DECISIVE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS AND SYRIANS HAD ARRIVED. BACHIR HAD PREDICTED THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD CARRY THEIR INVASION ALL THE WAY UP TO THE DAMASCUS ROAD, AND WOULD SUPPORT A LEBANESE FRONT MILITIA OFFENSIVE OPERATION IN THE AKKAR (NORTH OF TRIPOLI) AGAINST THE SYRIANS AS WELL. (FONMIN BOUTROS TOLD AMBASSADOR BACHIR HAD BEEN EXPECTING GREEN LIGHT FROM ISRAELIS.) THIS HAD NOT HAPPENED, AND, CONSEQUENTLY, BACHIR WAS VERY SHAPRPLY DISCREDITED WITH THE FRONT SENIOR LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND HIS OWN FATHER PIERRE GEMAYEL. BACHIR HIMSELF HAD BEEN DISILLUSIONED WITH WHAT HE THOUGHT WERE HIS ISRAELI ALLIES AS THE RESULT OF THE WAY THEY CARRIED OUT THEIR INVASION, WHICH HAD NOT DESTROYED THE PLO AT ALL, BUT MERELY DRIVEN THE PALESTINIANS CLOSER TO BEIRUT. (COMMENT: BACHIR HIMSELF TOLD EMBOFF MUCH THE SAME THING A FEW DAYS EARLIER.)

4. THE LEBANESE FRONT LEADERSHIP, PAKRADOUNI SAID, (AND ALSO PRESIDENT SARKIS AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS) NOW BELIEVED THAT CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM NATIONAL RECONCILIATION IN LEBANON WAS IMPOSSIBLE IN THE ABSENCE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. THUS, BASIC LEBANESE POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND THE PROSPECT OF PROGRESS ON THE POLITICAL ISSUES WERE SET BACK TO WHERE THEY WERE ABOUT A YEAR AGO. INSTEAD, THE LEBANESE FRONT LEADERSHIP NOW SAW THAT ITS ONLY STRATEGY WAS TO SEEK TO PROMOTE AND WAIT FOR BROAD DISAFFECTION ON THE PART OF LEBANON' MOSLEMS FROM THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, LEADING EVENTUALLY TO THE POSSIBILITY OF COMBINED CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM ACTION AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS. IN A SENSE, THE POLITICAL DYNAMIC IN LEBANON HAD RETURNED TO CIVIL WAR DAYS: A STRUGGLE BETWEEN MARONITES AND PALESTINIANS, WITH THE MOSLEMS OF LEBANON CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE.

5. PALESTINIAN ATTITUDES. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT THE PLO LEADERSHIP SEEMED TO BE FULLY AWARE THAT THE LEBANESE FRONT WAS BEGINNING TO WORK SYSTEMATICALLY TOWARDS WINNING OVER THE MOSLEM LEADERSHIP, AND THAT THIS ITSELF CONSTITUTED A DANGER TO THE PALESTINIAN POSITION. ACCORDINGLY, THE PALESTINIANS WERE ALREADY REACTING. THEY HAD BEGUN AN INTENSIVE BRIBERY CAMPAIGN AMONG MOSLEM POLITICAL LEADERS, AND WOULD,

AS THE SITUATION REQUIRED, RESORT TO STRONGER METHODS SUCH AS SELECTIVE ASSASSINATIONS.

6. THE SOUTH. PAKRADOUNI IS CERTAIN THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL NOT REPEAT NOT WITHDRAW FROM SOUTH LEBANON. THEIR BASIC CONDITION - PREVENTION OF A PALESTINIAN RETURN TO THE SOUTH - COULD NOT BE MET. NEITHER UNIFIL, NOR THE LEBANESE ARMY, NOR THE SYRIAN ARMY, NOR ALL OF THEM WORKING TOGETHER, WOULD PRODUCE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE ISRAELIS WOULD WITHDRAW.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 1946

A. UNIFIL. A VIOLENT ENCOUNTER BETWEEN UNIFIL CONTINGENTS AND ONE OR ANOTHER PALESTINIAN ELEMENT WAS INEVITABLE. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MOST LIKELY AT TYRE, WHERE BOTH FRENCH TROOPS AND PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS ARE NOW PRESENT IN LARGE NUMBERS, FACE TO FACE. AS SOON AS THE FIRST CASUALTIES OCCURRED, UNIFIL CONTRIBUTING STATES WOULD BEGIN TO RETHINK THEIR COMMITMENT, AND AS A RESULT A SUFFICIENTLY LARGE UNIFIL WOULD NEVER COME INTO EXISTENCE. ALTERNATIVELY, THE UN COMMAND WOULD TAKE STEPS TO AVOID DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE

PALESTINIANS, WHICH WOULD MEAN THAT THE PALESTINIANS  
WOULD REGAIN CONSIDERABLE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT  
IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHICH WOULD HAVE THE SAME EFFECT  
OF MAKING THE UN OPERATION A FAILURE IN ISRAELI EYES.

B. THE LEBANESE ARMY LEADERSHIP WAS SAYING IT WAS  
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WILLING TO GO SOUTH, BUT THIS WAS A BLUFF: GENERAL  
KHOURY WAS SAYING IT BUT ONLY BECAUSE HE WAS FULLY  
AWARE THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS AND FOREIGN MINISTER  
BOUTROS DID NOT WANT THE ARMY TO GO SOUTH. SARKIS  
AND BOUTROS WERE SIMPLY UNWILLING TO TAKE THE RISK  
OF A DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE PALESTINIANS.  
EVEN IF SARKIS WERE TO GIVE THE ORDER, HOWEVER, THE  
LEBANESE ARMY WOULD NOT GO IN AN EFFECTIVE FASHION.  
ALREADY, KHOURY WAS ESTABLISHING VARIOUS CONDITIONS,  
AND HE WOULD FIND MORE CONDITIONS WHICH HAD TO BE  
MET. IF, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE ARMY ACTUALLY  
DID MOVE SOUTH, IT WOULD PROBABLY BEGIN TO DISINTE-  
GRATE AS SOON AS IT GOT THERE.

C. FINALLY, SYRIA WOULD NOT ACT TO PREVENT A  
PALESTINIAN RETURN TO THE SOUTH. THE SOVIETS HAD  
TAKEN A HARD LINE IN SUPPORT OF THE PLO'S CLAIM TO  
ITS RIGHT TO RETURN SOUTH, AND THE SYRIANS  
WOULD NOT TAKE A DIFFERENT VIEW, PARTICULARLY  
IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT PAKRADOUNI CALLED "ENORMOUS"  
NEW SOVIET MILITARY DELIVERIES TO SYRIA.

7. TOKEN MOVES TO THE SOUTH. NEVERTHELESS, THE  
GOVERNMENT WAS BENDING TO FOREIGN PRESSURE TO SHOW SOME  
INTENT OF MOVING SOUTH. PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT,  
PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT AMBASSADOR PARKER'S CONVERSATION  
WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WEEK  
HAD RESULTED IN THE PRESIDENT CALLING IN INTERNAL  
SECURITY FORCES COMMANDER COLONEL AHMED AL-HAJJ ON  
APRIL 3. HAJJ WAS TOLD TO TAKE THE RISKS TO  
ESTABLISH SMALL CONTINGENTS OF LEBANESE POLICE,  
PARTICULARLY AT TYRE. THE RATIONALE FOR SENDING  
POLICE RATHER THAN THE ARMY WAS BOUTROS' DOING:  
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POLICE UNITS WERE NOT EXPECTED TO CARRY OUT MILITARY  
OPERATIONS, THAT IS, TO FIGHT THE PALESTINIANS.  
THEREFORE, NOTHING WOULD BE LOST IN TERMS OF FACE

WHEN THEY IN FACT DID NOT DO SO. THE ARMY, HOWEVER,  
WOULD LISE FACE WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE SITUATION.

8. IN SUM, PAKRADOUNI BELIEVED THAT NEITHER THE LEBANESE ARMY NOR UNIFIL, NOR THE SYRIANS WERE GOING TO DO WHAT WAS ESSENTIAL TO MAKE AN ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH LEBANON POSSIBLE. THE SYRIANS, TO BE SURE, MIGHT INDEED BE WILLING TO MOVE THEIR FORCES DOWN TO THE LITANI, BUT WERE ABSOLUTELY UNWILLING TO DO THIS AS LONG AS THE ISRAELIS WERE ANYWHERE IN SOUTH LEBANON. THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT DO ANYTHING TO JEOPARDIZE THEIR PUBLIC STANCE OF SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIANS.

9. COMMENT: PAKRADOUNI WAS MORE PESSIMISTIC THAN ON ANY PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER IN THE PRECEEDING SIXTEEN MONTHS. HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT THE UPSHOT WILL BE IN SOUTH LEBANON, EXCEPT THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL STAY. THE WEAKNESS OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE BEEN MADE MANIFEST, AND THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR WILL RESUME, ALTHOUGH IN A LESS VIOLENT FORM (AT LEAST AS LONG AS THE SYRIAN ARMY REMAINED IN LEBANON.)

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PALESTINIANS, MILITARY PLANS, COMBAT OPERATIONS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES, LIBERATION FRONTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Review Media Identifier:**  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014